

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MADRID 09501 012346Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01  
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 ACDA-12 HA-05  
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-----025017 020749Z /17

R 011606Z DEC 77  
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2685  
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
AMCONSUL CASABLANCA  
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY RABAT  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

S E C R E T MADRID 09501

E.O. 11652 XGDS-1  
TAGS: PINR, MO, SS, AG  
SUBJECT: SPANISH VIEW OF SAHARA CONFLICT

REF: STATE 276461

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH POLITICAL COUNSELOR, NOVEMBER 30, THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S CHIEF FOR NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST (CAJAL) HAD VARIOUS COMMENTS RELATED TO QUESTIONS POSED IN REFTEL, AND WE PASS THEM ALONG AS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST TO ADDRESSEES.

2. POLISARIO. WITHOUT SPECIFYING HIS SOURCE, CAJAL SAID THE POLISARIO HAS ABOUT 5,000 MEN UNDER ARMS. WITH INCREASING AMOUNTS OF INCREASINGLY EFFECTIVE WEAPONS, ITS MORALE IS HIGH, AND ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE IS GROWING. IT REMAINS UNABLE, HOWEVER, TO IMPOSE A SOLUTION BY FORCE, HE SAID. IN ADDITION TO ITS SAFE-HAVEN IN ALGERIA,

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THE POLISARIO APPARENTLY HAS CERTAIN REMOTE, MOUNTAINOUS AREAS INSIDE THE WESTERN SAHARA ITSELF WHERE IT OPERATES WITH IMPUNITY. ORIGINALLY A CREATURE OF ALGERIA, IT HAS DEVELOPED A SENSE OF INDEPENDENCE AND IS NO LONGER SUBJECT, AT LEAST ENTIRELY, TO ALGERIAN CONTROL.

3. ALGERIA, IN ADDITION TO THE PROBLEMS WHICH AN

INCREASINGLY INDEPENDENT POLISARIO COULD CREATE, MAY ALSO FIND ITSELF SOMEDAY SERIOUSLY TROUBLED, CAJAL SAID, BY THE CREATION IT HAS ENCOURAGED WITHIN ITS TERRITORY OF REFUGEE CAMPS WHICH HAVE ATTRACTED PEOPLE, SOME FOR IDEOLOGICAL REASONS, SOME FOR FOOD, FROM ALL OVER THE SAHEL AREA. (IT IS KNOWN, HE SAID, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THERE ARE TUAREGS FROM MALI IN THE TINDOUF CAMPS.) THEIR CONCENTRATION IN ONE PLACE IS FOSTERING A SENSE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY WHICH THEY PREVIOUSLY DID NOT HAVE, AND WHICH COULD COME TO REBOUND AGAINST ALGERIA. NOTING THAT "FANTASTIC" CLAIMS HAD BEEN MADE REGARDING THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE TINDOUF CAMPS (BUT OFFERING NO ESTIMATE OF HIS OWN FOR THE TOTAL FIGURE), CAJAL SAID THERE MIGHT BE AS MANY AS 10,000 TRUE SAHRAWIS THERE.

4. MOROCCO. THE MOROCCAN MILITARY, CAJAL SAID, IN VIEW OF THE IMPOSSIBILITY IN CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF DOING AWAY WITH THE POLISARIO, WOULD PROBABLY LIKE TO CARRY OUT A DIRECT STRIKE AGAINST ALGERIA. THE PURPOSE WOULD BE TO ACHIEVE SOME SPECIFIC MILITARY OBJECTIVES (INCLUDING PRESUMABLY THE ELIMINATION OF THE POLISARIO'S ESSENTIAL REAR BASE) BEFORE THE INTERVENTION OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (I.E. THE OAU AND/OR THE UN) AND THE SUPERPOWERS PUT OUT THE FIRE AND IMPOSED A SOLUTION. NOTING THAT HE HIMSELF KNOWS NOTHING OF SUCH MATTERS, CAJAL ADDED THAT EXPERT OPINION (NOT OTHERWISE IDENTIFIED)

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HELD THAT MOROCCO LACKED THE AIR-COVER CAPABILITY NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT SUCH AN OPERATION SUCCESSFULLY. STABLER

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
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